

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 15 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you, herewith, a concept paper for the debate of the Security Council on the impact of illicit arms trafficking on peace and security in the Central African region (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Emmanuel **Issoze-Ngondet**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex to the letter dated 15 March 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Office of the President of the Security Council

(Gabon, March 2010)

Debate on the impact of illicit arms trafficking on peace and security in the Central African region

Concept paper

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to be of major concern to the international community. We welcome the close attention of the international community to this issue and the global, regional and even national initiatives taken with respect to it.

It must be recognized, however, that this phenomenon is a destabilizing factor that affects the security, humanitarian and development situation of Member States.

Security

- These weapons are used as a means of violating human rights, including in times of peace, in particular, through the resurgence of crime and armed gangs as well as road blockers (*coupeurs de route*) and mercenaries;
- Small arms and light weapons are also at the root of a new wave of crises and conflicts that compromise any prospect of peace and security.

Humanitarian issues

- The direct threat of the use of light weapons is forcing millions of persons to flee their homes, resulting in a growing number of refugees and displaced persons (Angola, Gabon, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Uganda);
- The use of light weapons is encouraging the recruitment of child soldiers and sexual violence against women and girls (resolution 1888 (2009)).

Development

- The large-scale presence of light weapons impedes socio-economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Central Africa.

In an effort to formulate a collective response to this scourge, Member States held the first United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in New York from 9 to 21^{*} July 2001. At the conclusion of the Conference, States adopted the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

^{*} Translator's note: According to the report of the Conference (A/CONF.192/15), it took place from 9 to 20 July 2001.

This major Conference, a vital step by the General Assembly, was followed by numerous initiatives, both global and regional.

The Security Council also devoted the necessary attention to this issue. Action by the Secretary-General and substantive Secretariat departments in submitting specific proposals and pertinent analyses for consideration by Member States must also be acknowledged.

Central Africa, one of the regions hardest hit by the phenomenon of small arms and light weapons, has, for its part, taken concrete measures with a view to curbing the harmful effects of such weapons.

Actions taken by countries in the subregion

Aware of the impact of illicit trade in arms on stability, peace and development in their subregion, the Central African countries have adopted confidence-building measures and set up mechanisms to promote peace, with the support of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

They have also decided to elaborate a binding legal instrument and modalities for implementing it in order to guarantee subregional monitoring of small arms and light weapons, ammunition and any equipment that could be used in their manufacture.

The preliminary draft of this instrument will be considered in negotiations at the thirtieth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to be held in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 26 to 30 April 2010.

Objectives of the debate

During its presidency, Gabon will encourage the Security Council to monitor developments in the illicit trade in arms in the subregion and to discuss innovative measures with a view to combating and eradicating this phenomenon more effectively.

We hope to stimulate a more in-depth discussion on ways and means of strengthening the implementation of the measures contained in the July 2001 Programme of Action and the International Tracing Instrument, including its provisions on the marking of small arms and light weapons, as well as in various relevant Security Council resolutions.

In this connection, participants are invited to make specific proposals on ways and means of:

- Strengthening national and subregional mechanisms for combating illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, as well as confidence-building measures such as those adopted within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa;
- Increasing transparency in arms, including through the establishment of subregional registers of national stockpiles of small arms and light weapons;
- Helping States in the subregion to implement embargoes on arms identified by the Security Council;

- Strengthening the capacities of the Economic Community of Central African States with regard to peace and security;
- Pursuing the discussion on interventions aimed at limiting the demand for light weapons with a view to curbing the negative impact of arms proliferation on development, in particular on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

A Presidential Statement setting out follow-up measures will be issued at the conclusion of the debate.

The following regional and subregional organizations have been invited to participate in this debate: African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the European Union.
